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ABSTRACT

The Ontario (Canada) Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA) was established in 1973 to meet the need of the province's educational administrators for inservice professional development. Its objectives include meeting these professional development needs, developing recommendations for professional preparation programs, and encouraging the conduct and utilization of research on educational administration. Supported by major educational organizations in Ontario, OCLEA is run by a board of directors and an executive director. OCLEA's programs comprise workshops and seminars in professional development, information collection and dissemination (including a journal), and research and development activities to assess and meet administrative research needs. OCLEA's programs are funded by grants and service fees and always include provision for evaluation. The organization has been hindered by members' lack of commitment, competition with other organizations, and negative and indifferent attitudes among client groups. These hindrances have been met by encouraging maximum representation and involvement of client and constituent groups, establishing communication networks, decentralizing programs, and continually evaluating professional development needs. An assessment of OCLEA's current status and future problems indicates that it must expand its services and client base to survive. (Author/RW)

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THE MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS PAPER

OCLEA: ONE APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Paper Presented

at the

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OCLEA: ONE APPROACH TO EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Donald Musella

I Background

A Problems

The underlying problem was the need for changes leading to improved education in the province of Ontario, Canada. One solution selected by the creators of the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA) was to bring about change through the professional development of practising educational administrators.

The specific needs that led to the creation of OCLEA were as follows:

1. Ontario had limited formal professional development offerings for practising and potential administrators. Consequently, the bulk of the administrative and supervisory staffs of colleges, ministries, and school districts had no access to formal professional development in Ontario.
2. Few of the informal in-service activities available were directed to the upper levels of practising educational administrators; further, the informal in-service program was devoid of any consistent and concentrated focus.
3. The certification of supervisory officials did not incorporate any professional development program.
4. There was little direct input from the administrative groups in directing both formal and informal professional development activities; hence the claims of irrelevance and lack of practical application were legitimate arguments.
5. There was a lack of coordination of the efforts of all the provincial organizations in the area of professional development.

B Importance of the Innovation

The problem was critical to the province of Ontario in the mid-70s because of the large number of school and community college administrators who were young, were new to their positions, and had met the minimal requirements for formal education. In addition, the trend toward increased accountability was beginning to emerge and the educational administrators had indicated the need both to keep abreast of the changes in education and to improve their competence.

II Description

A Objectives

The Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA) was founded in 1973. Based on the professional development needs described in a preceding section, the following objectives were developed to guide OCLEA's direction:

1. To meet the professional development needs of educational administration in Ontario by:
   - developing person and interpersonal skills through group experiences;
   - providing coordinated information on recent developments in educational practice and research;
   - maintaining an up-to-date inventory of needs and resources in educational leadership throughout the province.
2. To develop recommendations for professional preparation programs related to practical needs by:
   - promoting cooperation between educational organizations;
   - promoting working relationships between the practitioner and the theorist.
3. To encourage the discovery and application of knowledge in the field of educational administration by:
   - focussing on areas offering opportunities for relevant research;
   - developing alternative programs, structures, and policies designed to effect change in desirable directions.

B Decision to Implement

Formal support and commitment were obtained from all the major constituent organizations at the institutional level. Prior to funding approval, all Board members were appointed by the constituent groups as their representatives. The funding agency's insistence on OCLEA's legitimacy under university control disarmed all attempts to politicize OCLEA, for it resolved the issues re its location, staff selection, and fiscal responsibility. This decision was critical to the establishment of cooperative, rather than vested interest, control.

C Organizational Structure and Programs

The policy-setting body of OCLEA is the Board of Directors, consisting of representatives from the nine major constituent organizations of the province of Ontario.

The administrative group includes the Executive Director, Assistant Director and support staff.

Three Board standing committees serve to develop each of the major functions: professional development, information services, and research and development.

1. Professional Development Programs

Professional development is the major activity of OCLEA. Each year approximately 32 workshops and seminars are conducted, along with 12 contracts tailored to the specific needs of the contracting agency.

2. Information Services

The information services program consists of the following elements:

- a field representation system;
- an information collection/dissemination system;
- a formal periodic publication.

3. Research and Development Program

The specific objectives of the research and development program are:

- to assess the present state of research and development in educational administration;
- to develop priorities for needed research and development in educational administration;
- to develop proposals for contract research and development activities response to the priorities.

D Funding

A basic grant was obtained from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for a four-year period. In addition, most services are provided on a fee basis; these include professional development programs and contracts, research and development programs and contracts, and the OCLEA Journal. The annual budget averages approximately $100,000 in cash flow plus $300,000 of in-kind contributions.

E Evaluation

All activities are evaluated, using questionnaires completed at the end of each activity. These are used primarily as diagnostic tools. In addition, data is obtained regarding the specific changes which resulted from participation in OCLEA activities.

III Change Analysis

A Hindering Factors

1. Lack of commitment to OCLEA by the organizations represented and/or by the individuals representing the organizations.
2. Perceived (and real) threat of OCLEA to the organizations represented on the policy making group due to the competition for clients for activities sponsored by both organizations.
3. Negative attitude toward OCLEA on the part of many of the client groups, questioning the need for another organization and/or for additional professional development activities.
4. Substantial indifference toward OCLEA, a new and unknown organization.

B Strategies

The strategies for overcoming the hindering factors are best summarized by the basic elements of the OCLEA model:

1. Maximum involvement by constituent client groups in all aspects of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The intent is that every member of each constituent organization and especially the practising administrators, would see OCLEA as his/her organization; the result would be a long-lasting commitment to OCLEA as one way of improving oneself.
2. Comprehensive communication coverage based on a firmly established communication network. In a short time, OCLEA has become well known to most of the administrators in the province and, to a lesser extent, beyond. The representative plan (developed through personal contact) plus the OCLEA publications were crucial in establishing and maintaining this network.
3. Decentralization of all programs to maximize the "self-help" concept. Grass roots involvement in a real way, that is actually developing and conducting the professional development programs in partnership with the academics and ministry personnel (with no imposed mandates from any central office), has been the key factor in the success of this part of the operation.
4. Continuous evaluation and professional development needs assessments to guide program development. The immediate use of the evaluative feedback is essential; the intent is to keep participants aware that their needs are being met with some positive changes in program.
5. Maximum representation on all policy bodies. The cooperative nature of OCLEA is reinforced on all occasions. There is a conscious attempt to avoid a political base. The objective is to establish OCLEA as a cooperative which

services all bodies (association and organizations) in ways that are supplementary to their programs and which pose no threat to the maintenance and development of any one (or several) constituencies at the expense of others.

C Events Not Anticipated

1. Increased competition from constituent groups.
2. Increased competition from newly-created consulting agencies.
3. Decreased financial support for professional development from the major client group -- school boards.

D Current Status

Seven years have passed. The major barriers at this time are:

1. Increased competition from both member and non-member organizations.
2. Limited mandate perceived by governing body and staff.
3. Policies that require major support from volunteers.

The facilitating forces at this time are:

1. A successful record of high quality activities.
2. Substantial attitudinal support from most constituent organizations and individual resources.
3. Substantial individual resources commitment.
4. Continued high status and credibility.

Forces Pro	Forces Resisting
- high quality services	- increased competition for similar services
- high quality resources	- policy limiting resource personnel to volunteers
- high status and credibility	- volunteer base reduction
	- lack of constituent support
	- limited mandate
	- resistance to change and to extending the mandate

III Strategy Design

A The Future

OCLEA will eventually cease to exist in its present form.

B Strategies to Prevent Oblivion

1. Extend the client base to include additional groups, specifically those outside of formal education.
2. Extend services to include research, development, and training contracts.
3. Extend mandate to include a national and international client base.

Comments re Strategies

OCLEA is a service-delivering organization with a potential client base that is practically unlimited. It has high visibility, credibility and "political" support.

Its present operation -- client base, financial support, programs cannot sustain the organization.

Note: The author was the Executive Director of OCLEA during its first five years of operation (1973-78).